ABSTRACT

A protocol independent and platform independent message format is provided for the transmission of messages between network elements. Service providers are providing multimedia services over broadband networks to customers, and a generic message format is provided to accommodate communication between network elements facilitating the multimedia services. The generic message format includes at least one 32-bit media identifier (MID) identifying a type of media file associated with a message using the generic message format. A message having the generic message format may include up to 32 MIDs, each having two sections. The first section of an MID preferably includes 8 bits and has a media file descriptor (MFD). The MFD may be mapped for accommodating multiple types of media. The second section preferably includes twenty-four bits and has a media file identification (MFI). The MFD contains information that describes the use of the MFI, such as a type of media file or a type of announcement in the media file identified by the MID.